

Socialist Worker

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(01) 8722682 <http://www.swp.ie> swp@clubi.ie

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CHILD ABUSE SCANDAL:

Stop the church cover-up

CARDINAL Desmond Connell was rightly jeered and heckled in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral when he yet again offered an apology for his cover-up of child sexual abuse.

John Kelly of the Survivors of Child Abuse Group commented, "Like anyone accused of obstructing justice I think he should be lifted by the gardai and taken to Harcourt Square and questioned."

"The time has gone beyond the point of apologies." What many victims now required were "deeds and actions and not words," he said.

Appalling

American cleric and canon lawyer Fr Tom Doyle described the archdiocese's behaviour to victims as "disgusting and appalling".

He said priests at all levels of the hierarchy had colluded not to report allegations against priests: "They have stonewalled and isolated victims. There is something radically, radically wrong."



Connell hid evidence

Fr Doyle was outspoken in campaigning for measures to address the problem of paedophile priests within the Catholic Church in the US before he was transferred to work as chaplain at an army base in Germany.

In one case an abuser was given a clean character reference by Cardinal Connell in 1988, despite the fact that he had admitted assaulting a

young altar boy in 1974. Cardinal Connell, who was archbishop at the time, says he found nothing on Fr Patrick Hughes' file to indicate he had ever been in trouble despite the Church paying out almost £60,000 in settlement to the victim and ensuring the return of pornographic pictures Hughes had taken of the boy.

The victim's solicitor, said he found it unbelievable "It would seem to be stretching credulity to

What we think

THE CHURCH thinks it is above the law when it comes to child abuse.

They even cite their own canon law to prove that there is one law for them and another for everyone else.

It isn't just that Connell is a right-wing bigot - though he is, he prevented a protestant from getting a school principle's job and described the athlete Sonia O'Sullivan as a slut for having a child without being married.

Rather the whole institution has been complicit in the systematic abuse of children. From the industrial schools to paedophile priests it is clear that the church is a repeat offender and determined to cover-up its crimes.

The Church has enormous

wealth; the Bishops palace in Drumcondra alone is worth millions. The criminal assets bureau should seize their assets and give the money to the victims and their families.

The State won't do this because they are tied to church control.

As early as the 1940's the State knew of institutional church abuse and did nothing.

The political establishment has always given the church a free hand over health and education instead of having properly funded state controlled services.

At the very least Connell should be charged with criminal conspiracy, and church control of our health and education system must be removed.

breaking point," he said. "They [the Church] have records going back to the time of Christ."

Unbelievable

The Cardinal ignored the advice of a tribunal set up in 1992 to investigate claims of sex abuse against Fr Tony Walsh whose paedophile assaults on young boys had been reported at least as early as 1980.

He was finally stopped

when he attacked an 11-year-old boy in a toilet after attending the funeral of the child's grandfather.

The boy's parents alerted gardai and Walsh was jailed but even then Cardinal Connell did not reveal Walsh's past offences to gardai.

Fr Noel Reynolds was appointed chaplain to the National

Rehabilitation Hospital by the Cardinal in 1997, after parents in County Wicklow had twice complained about his behaviour.

'Absolute denial'

ONE LAWYER, representing victims who are bringing criminal actions against clerical abusers, accused the Catholic Church of being in "absolute and total denial about its responsibility for the actions of child abusers within its ranks."

"In public, they are fulsome in apologising and expressing remorse but when it comes to the Four Courts, they are stonewalling cases wherever possible. Their strategy is to deny everything," he said.

Victims of sexual abuse have made some 8,000 individual complaints of sexual and physical abuse from the religious.

Calls

In addition to the cases already being investigated, victims' organisations and rape crisis centres have been inundated with thousands of calls from previously silent abuse victims.

But many of the priests under investigation will never appear before a court

and many aren't even being investigated at all.

Only a small number of the hundreds of clerical child abuse investigations completed by the gardai over the past five years will ever result in court prosecutions.

Over 90 percent of files prepared for the DPP on institutional physical and sexual abuse have been returned as unsuitable for prosecution.

One solicitor representing the Survivors of Child Abuse (SOCA) organisation says "It's not just the Church which has questions to answer. Senior politicians and civil servants in the Department of Education would be every bit as responsible for consistently turning a blind eye to reported and documented abuse."

The Church is facing lawsuits over the abuse of children by priests and religious in every diocese in the country.

In Canada rather than putting the victims through the trauma of tribunal and court appearances, the Canadian authorities compensated the victims directly and then, in turn, sued the Christian Brothers organisation.

Victims' organisations say that the church has "bought" immunity against prosecution by agreeing to pay into the State's compensation fund for abuse victims.

Irish Fat Cats make millions off US military refuelling

IT IS not just that the government likes sucking up to George Bush, which makes them back refuelling in Shannon and an EU army—their business friends have a direct interest in keeping the US military sweet.

After the Nice vote the government will continue to push ahead with militarisation but at least some of their friends will profit.

Multi-millionaires Ulick McEvaddy and his brother Des are two of the most powerful and secretive men in Ireland.

At the heart of their empire is their aviation company Omega Air.

Omega Air has just won a multi million contract for air to air refuelling of US military aircraft.

It is for refuelling the aircraft that will be used in any attack on Iraq.

According to the company Omega Air is the "is the largest single supplier of B707 aircraft to the US military"

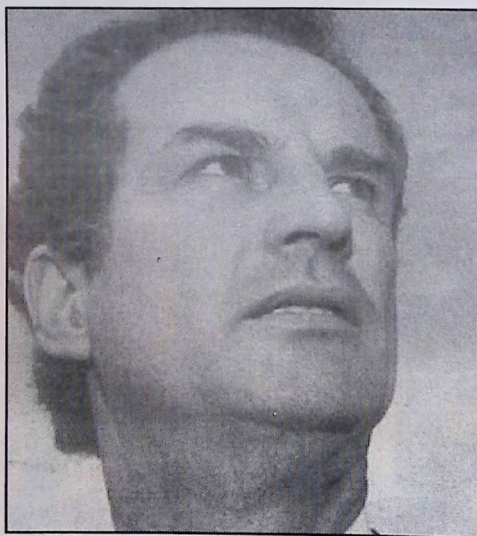
The McEvaddys already supply the US military with planes used as part of very sophisticated radar, surveillance and target attack systems.

Targets

These systems include AWACS and Joint Surveillance Target Radar Systems—the so-called "smart bombs" that missed 70 percent of their targets in the first Gulf War.

These systems were also used in the Balkan and Afghanistan wars and are at the cutting edge of NATO's technology. Omega Air is managed from Sark, the Channel Islands tax haven.

Ulick McEvaddy is a member of the British Royal United Service Institute



Ulick McEvaddy

which according to its publicity forms "essential links between the armed forces and those who make decisions under economic and

political disciplines".

Omega Air was named among the seven international aerospace firms which have an interest in supplying and operating flight refuelling aircraft to the RAF.

One of their companies bought an 800-acre arms dump in North Wales from the British government.

The company had planned to build a re-engineering operation there but they faced massive opposition from local people when they announced plans to build a nuclear waste dump there.

Friends in low places

BOTH MARY Harney and Charlie McCreevy have taken holidays in the McEvaddy's villa.

The McEvaddys are behind a controversial privately owned terminal at Dublin Airport.

They also sought backing to oppose new EU rules on aircraft noise levels.

These rules would impose limits on noise allowed and would have cost McEvaddy's airline, Omega Air, which uses many older noisy aircraft, millions of euro.

Harney discussed the Air Noise Bill with the tycoons, she had a meeting where she discussed the new regulations on air noise pollution.

Deferred

Several weeks later Harney took part in the European Council of Ministers vote which deferred the introduction of regulations saving McEvaddy millions.

Harney and McCreevy are not the only politicians to receive McEvaddy's "generosity".

Nora Owen and Jim Mitchell have also stayed at McEvaddy's villa. And many a politician has been given a lift in the McEvaddy's executive jet.

McEvaddy has consistently lobbied Irish politicians on NATO membership for Ireland.

NATO is a key McEvaddy customer and he is thought to have been behind Ireland's membership of NATO's Partnership for Peace.

The McEvaddys are generous with political donations. They were major donors to Fine Gael.

Both Jim and Gay Mitchell have admitted receiving donations from them.

Ulick McEvaddy tried to persuade a key witness for the McCracken Tribunal not to testify against disgraced TD Michael Lowry.

How much money they gave to the Yes to Nice campaign has yet to be released.

Blair's Garvaghy gimmick

AT A time when Loyalist bigots in Northern Ireland were terrorising Catholic residents on the Garvaghy Road in Portadown, Tony Blair came up with a ludicrous "solution".

He sent his chief of staff Jonathan Powell to see the residents in 1999 with the idea that Tony Blair would lead the Orange Order march down the Garvaghy Road and Cherie Blair would lead a parallel march of Catholics.

Tony Benn reveals this plan in the latest edition of his diaries. He said to the Catholic residents, "I can't believe that suggestion was seriously put forward."

He replied, "Oh yes, indeed, and it's in writing." Benn concludes, "It gave an insight into the idea that Blair has only got to descend from the clouds and all historical problems will disappear."

BOSSSES' NICE BLACKMAIL

TWO thousand workers at Intel's plant in Leixlip received a curious letter just before the Nice poll.

The workers are employed by Mercury

which is working on a huge project for Intel, the multinational computer chip manufacturer.

The letter from Mercury management was sent to each employee's home and demanded they vote Yes in the Nice refer-

endum. It claimed that Mercury would not get involved with the politics of the issue but called on each employee "to ratify the Nice Treaty to secure their jobs within a European context."

Organise to stop the war

GEORGE BUSH and Tony Blair claimed that their "war on terror" would make the world a safer place. The horrific bombing of the Sari nightclub in Bali shows that they were lying.

Terrorism breeds in conditions of poverty and hopelessness.

The bombing of thousands of civilians in Afghanistan and the continuing misery imposed on millions of people by the policies of the IMF and the World Bank could only increase that despair.

Violence

People are driven to acts of violence by a system that forces them to watch their children die of needless hunger and curable diseases. They have to endure living in filthy shanty town hovels within sight of luxury hotels.

They suffer humiliation at the hands of the pampered rich and see all hope of living a secure life stolen from them by multinational companies which ruthlessly defend their profits.

These are people desperate for some change for themselves and their families, but they can see no way of achieving it.

Faced with this situation, some people can be driven to take part of the brutality the system dishes out and seek to hurl it back at their oppressors. When people lash out, they rarely hit those really responsible for their hopelessness.

Instead they often cause the deaths of other ordinary people. Such acts also have no effect on stopping repressing powers from imposing their will on the world.

But there is a different way, one that builds on hope and not despair. It has been seen on the streets across Europe have hundreds of thousands of people have protested against war.

It is this kind of collective opposition that can provide inspiration and hope to all those suffering. It can show that there is an effective way of challenging inequality, injustice, capitalism and war.

To get involved in the Anti War Movement ring 087 6329511



Not all-powerful

GEORGE BUSH has the military power to smash Iraq easily. But for all his attempts to pose as an all-powerful president, he is a very nervous man.

One week he talks about regime change, the next he is doing deals to get UN backing for war, and then he talks of building a coalition.

He is prepared to go it alone to attack Iraq but he is also desperate to win support from other regimes around the world if he can. Bush has good reason to be worried. He is terrified of the upheavals a war on Iraq could spark across the Middle East.

And he knows how quickly he can lose support at home. Revelations about more corporate scandals and the faltering economy can rapidly undermine domestic support for Bush.

US companies have announced more than one million job cuts so far this year. The number of people losing their home because they can't pay the mortgage has reached record levels.

Nearly half of all Americans think they or someone in their family will be out of a job within a year, according to a *New York Times/CBS* poll.

Most people polled say Bush spends too much time talking about Iraq while neglecting problems at home. And some people are fighting back. Around 10,500 US dockers have been locked out of ports along the US West Coast for resisting the bosses' attacks.

Bush is being driven to move so quickly to war abroad because he fears rising unpopularity at home. But the speed of this drive creates its own risks, pushing him to ignore the wishes of his allies and go it alone.

After Nice — fightback against the cuts

The Nice Treaty was passed under the weight of the entire establishment throwing vast amounts of money to win the campaign.

With the Referendum Commission and the corporate media to lie for them they were able to swamp the No argument with right-wing propaganda.

The Labour Party and Trade Union leadership's disgraceful position over the treaty didn't help.

It was noticeable though — as in Dublin Regional Conference of SIPTU — when trade unionists actual-

ly got to discuss the issues they came out against the treaty.

The fact that the treaty was passed doesn't make the government popular.

An *Irish Times* poll found the 60 percent of people don't trust the government or the media. Some 72 percent people don't trust the political parties.

The government is now moving ahead with the cuts, pushing privatisation and militarisation.

Madness

They are tied to the madness of neo-liberalism. That's why they wanted the Nice Vote passed so badly.

But the anger is growing throughout Ireland, over the contempt the rich show for the rest of us, over corruption cuts, inequality and war.

One October the 4th the unions showed the potential to tackle the government. We need to build on that potential.

What is required now is a serious push in the unions for a 24-hour general strike. Workers have more than enough grievances to advance.

There is the whole issue of redundancies and severance pay. The bosses should not be allowed to make huge profits in the Celtic Tiger boom and then throw workers on the scrap heap in the recession.

The cuts are due to get far worse when McCreevy announces more in December.

The annual conference of SIPTU agreed to call major regional demonstration on this issue at its conference last year. But so far nothing has been done.

Finally, political corruption. All the major unions have passed resolution calling for a day of action to demand jail sentences for corrupt politicians.

The bosses and their paid-for politicians in the Dail have shown they are organised.

We need to be too. Let's turn up the pressure to agitate for strike action to halt the government in its tracks.

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McCreevy is destroying our services

Education

EDUCATION IS one of the areas that Charlie McCreevy is targeting in his most recent round of cutbacks. Planned cuts in expenditure include:

- €6 million worth of cuts from initiatives to reduce the school drop-out rate
- €5 million from programmes geared towards encouraging kids from disadvantaged backgrounds to proceed to third level
- €3.8 million from adult education
- €6 million from in-service courses
- €2 million from second level building programmes.

It now seems that the DES will also seek to save €5 million by cancelling

some or all of the 200 extra teaching appointments agreed as part of the PPF.

Education is an area that can ill afford reductions in spending.

Already Ireland languishes at the bottom of the table in the OECD when it comes to state spending on education.

Revealed

Recently the OECD also revealed that 25 percent of the Irish adult population have low levels of literacy.

That these cuts are targeted on programmes and initiatives for those who experience difficulties within the education system makes them all the more reprehensible.

Many schools have seen marginal improvements over the last five years in terms of more supports and

extra teachers. However the reality is that little has changed and the devastation that was inflicted on Irish schools during the cutbacks in the 1980s has not been reversed.

A teacher in one inner city school described conditions in her school to *Socialist Worker*:

"The building is over 100 years old. The paint is peeling off the walls in some classrooms and chunks of plaster and paint are falling off the ceiling.

"The sinks in some of the infant classrooms are at adult level, many classrooms have no toilets and even five year olds have to leave the room and go down a steep staircase to get to them.

"There is no proper school yard and the building is draughty and cold. It's an appalling environment in which to work and a com-

pletely unsuitable learning environment.

"In terms of class size we still have some classes of well over twenty kids, an insufficient number of learning support teachers and inadequate access to psychological services. "Many of our children have attendance problems and are at an extremely high risk of early school leaving.

Targeted

"The fact that it is the likes of our school and our children who are being deliberately targeted by McCreevy's cuts sickens me to the core.

When he says these are cuts in planned future spending and they won't affect existing services, I want to laugh in his face.

"Does he really stand over existing levels of provision for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds?"

A couple of innovative pilot projects that have never been extended despite their success is the sum total of what Fianna Fail and the rest of them did for education.

Do they want to condemn a whole new generation to poverty and deprivation?"

Housing

34% increase in waiting lists

Housing is another public service that faces reductions in spending. Despite claims that the local authorities have increased the pool of housing available the number of people on local authority housing lists has spiralled.

According to the latest figures there are currently 52,726 households on the list nationally, that's a 34 percent increase in three years when 39,176 were waiting to be housed. In 1996 the number stood at 27,000.

This is causing untold hardship for thousands of families who are living in unsuitable and over-

crowded conditions and others who have been forced into B&Bs.

Anne from Athy told *Socialist Worker* about the situation her daughter is in. "My daughter is a lone parent with one ten year old child.

Refused

"She applied for a house a number of years ago but was refused one because she was working in Peerless Rugs at the time.

"With no other choice left to her she borrowed and bought her own place.

"When she found herself out of a job last July twelve months it was very hard.

"Luckily she had taken out insurance to protect against this situation and for the first

year, the insurance covered the mortgage.

"However that has come to an end and now she's paying €107 a week for her house, which after paying her kid's bus fares leaves her with €30 a week.

"She gets no help whatsoever with repayments from the state because at the moment she's still getting money from her stamps.

"There's no jobs at all here and there's nothing for people like my daughter who are doing their best to raise their kids.

"There's no council houses and if you don't have family to look after you they'd leave you out on the street.

"That's why people just have to start to fight to change things, because they'd leave us with nothing if they could get away with it"

ROISIN RYDER, a community development worker in Dublin's Fatima Mansions is appalled at the prospect of restrictions on spending in the area of second chance and adult education.

She has seen the benefits of broadening access to education at first hand in the last number of years.

Roisin explained what it has meant in the area in which she works:

"IN FATIMA Mansions, through the local community group Fatima Groups United and the Community Employment Scheme a range of adult education is available throughout the year both informal and formal.

"Informal education covers community development, community arts, personal development and community participation skills. The formal education programme offers classes towards FETAC Level 1 and 2, Junior Cert and Leaving Cert.

"For many of the par-

ticipants this is the first opportunity to have a positive experience of education".

Nuala, one of the participants commented: "I left school at 14 because I hated it and went out to work. I don't mind going now.

Achieved

I first learned the basics—to spell and to add! But now I have achieved NCVA Level 1, Junior Cert, which I just collected a few weeks ago.

"I am now studying for the leaving cert. I started two years ago and got an education."

According to Roisin "If there are cutbacks in adult education programmes like these it will deeply affect this community which is about to be regenerated.

"There is no point in building new houses—bricks and mortar—if there is no spending put into social regeneration which is education, health and other services."

Housing crisis in Dun Laoghaire

Sandra is living in a three bedroom house with her parents in the Dun Laoghaire area.

She has been on the housing waiting list for seven and a half years and has two daughters, one aged seven, the other aged two.

The house is grossly overcrowded with ten people currently living

there. Sandra's father has had two strokes recently and one of her daughters is mildly autistic which means that she screams quite a lot.

Sandra is desperate to get her own place. "My parents have reared their own children and now I feel like they have to rear mine too. My daughter is always asking me when are we going to have our own house for Christmas. I just want a little house

for us but the council make me feel as if I am begging. They seem to think that once you have a roof over your head everything is all right".

"I can't understand why the council boards up so many houses that are in good repair. Why are they not given to people on the list?"

"You also see council workers going into houses that are being vacated and ripping out all the fittings before its re-allocat-

ed. Many families have nothing and would be more than happy to go into them as they are".

Sandra is also concerned by what she sees as "the push in Dun Laoghaire to get working class people out of the area to make way for the rich. Even the shelters along the seafront road have had their roofs ripped off which means homeless people won't be able to use them anymore".

Blair caves in to Trimble's blackmail

TONY BLAIR'S decision to suspend the NI Assembly and his call for the IRA to disband is yet another climb down to the hard right of Unionism.

This is the fourth time that Blair has done this since 1998.

Each time, it has been a reaction to political blackmail and posturing by the Unionist Party. Trimble had already backed Jeffrey Donaldson's threat that the Ulster Unionists would resign if the IRA hadn't disbanded by next January.

Their statement didn't even mention the massive levels of loyalist violence that have racked areas of the North for the last two years.

Trimble has created a crisis aimed at further humiliating Sinn Fein, in order to shore up his own position within Unionism.

Just last month he wrote in the *Belfast Telegraph*, that in each previous crisis, "We first made sure that republicans would carry the blame internationally for the problem."

The alleged spying by Sinn Fein members at Stormont just gave them the excuse they were looking for.

Trimble and Blair are complete hypocrites.

The Blair government planted a listening device in Gerry Adams car during the 1999 negotiations.

They still maintain masses of watchtowers and spy posts across the North.

The avalanche of evidence that the RUC Special Branch and British military intelligence passed police files to loyalist paramilitaries throughout the Troubles, has never led to calls by Trimble

for Special Branch to be disbanded.

In fact, Trimble, along with Paisley and Donaldson, has resisted every move to change the RUC.

Throughout the Troubles, Trimble built his political career by associating with loyalist paramilitaries.

He was senior figure in the ultra-right wing Vanguard movement in the early 1970s which had close links with the UDA, and was a leader of the Ulster Clubs in the 1980s, along with UDA leader John McMichael.

Right through the Troubles, there were networks linking so-called respectable Unionist politicians with elements of the police, the British Army and loyalist assassins.

None of the changes under the Good Friday Agreement have come close to dealing with these links.

The police raid on Sinn Fein's offices at Stormont, and the way in which Unionist leaders knew about it almost as soon as it happened, if not before, highlights the sinister connections that still operate between the highest levels of the police and Unionist politicians.

Now Blair has once again backed Trimble, and handed a symbolic victory to the right-wing of Unionism who have always resisted power-sharing with Catholic parties.

This is a recipe for similar crises for years to come and can only give encouragement to the loyalist gangs who are out to destroy the peace.



Warmongers call for peace

THERE IS another deep hypocrisy operating in this latest crisis. Blair and Trimble claim that what is at stake is Sinn Fein being committed to "exclusively peaceful and democratic politics".

A statement from George W Bush

backed Blair's decision to suspend the Assembly in order to ensure commitment to "peaceful politics".

This is at the same time that Blair and Bush have spent a year bombing Afghanistan and are preparing a massive military attack on Iraq.

Both Trimble and Paisley backed Blair's war in the British parliament,

before going on to accuse him of not doing enough to deal with "terrorism" in Northern Ireland.

Bush and Blair's so-called "war on terrorism" has created a right-wing atmosphere which has been exploited by governments all around the world as the excuse to crack down on any opposition.

Blair said in his speech that "after September 11, terrorism can no longer be tolerated".

But Bush and Blair do tolerate the Israeli state terrorism which has led to the

killing of almost 2,000 Palestinians in the last two years.

Ariel Sharon's defence, of course, is that he is on their side in the "war on terrorism".

Similarly, the Spanish government has used it as an excuse to close down Basque political party Herri Batasuna.

The Colombian government has stepped up its war against left-wing groups, aimed at securing the control of oil-pipelines for British and US oil companies, with a massive increase in military aid from the US this year.

THE FAULTLINE AT THE HEART OF THE PEACE PROCESS

Tony Blair claims that "sectarianism has no place in respectable politics". The Good Friday Agreement locked in sectarian division and put it at the heart of political debate.

The Unionist parties see nothing wrong with the way Northern Ireland was run for 50 years, using blatant discrimination and violence against Catholics to divide the working class and maintain the rule of the big industrialists and landowners who led the Unionist Party.

Ever since the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, in the late 1960s, they have portrayed any struggle for equality and justice as a "republican conspiracy". That why they cling to the myth that the IRA was the sole cause of the Troubles and that is what is behind their demand for an IRA surrender today.

Republican involvement in the Peace Process grew out of their recognition that the armed struggle couldn't succeed in driving Britain out and was counter-productive.

Throughout the process they have clung to the belief that Britain really wants to leave, and that forcing

Unionists to accept equality will lead by itself to a united Ireland.

SF have moved towards accepting the status quo in Ireland and Britain as legitimate. In recent weeks, they were on the verge of accepting the new policing arrangements in the North, under pressure from the US. SF might well be able to present themselves as the injured party in all this and shore up their own support.

Instability

They have no alternative to re-entering the Assembly. The faultline and the instability in the peace process will remain, because the Agreement does not offer a solution to the fundamental problems.

All that the British and Irish governments ever wanted in Northern Ireland, was stability. As a result, the Agreement papers over the real reasons for the Troubles, by saying that the source of the problem was violence between Protestant Unionists and Catholic Nationalists and that the solution was to manage the division between these "two identities". Politicians in the Assembly have to nominate

as either nationalist or unionist. This was always a formula for framing every issue in sectarian terms. Rows over hospital closures or housing problems are inevitably framed in terms of which of the "two communities" is losing out.

The roots of sectarianism have always been in politicians and bosses directing the despair of working class people onto other working class people, to divert attention from their own rule and divide us against ourselves.

This is the framework that the republicans and the SDLP have accepted as the only way of dealing with politics in the North. SF have promoted the illusion that the British establishment and the US State Department can be sponsors of peace and justice.

They have encouraged their supporters in working class areas to look to the corrupt Dublin government as allies in the struggle for equality. They accept the same sectarian logic preached by Unionism, that all Catholics have a common interest as against all Protestants.

As a result they offer no alternative to Protestant workers who want to resist the clarion calls of politicians like Trimble and Paisley,

Is the Assemble the only show in town?

FOR THE last four years, ordinary people in Northern Ireland have been encouraged to turn their eyes to every twist and turn between the politicians in Stormont as the beginning and end of politics here.

We are treated in the media coverage of these events as bystanders, who only have a walk-on role at election time, when our votes are weighed in the sectarian scales.

It is an insult. Working class people were the driving force behind the trade union rallies for peace which played a major role in the ceasefires of the mid-1990s.

Trade union rallies have continued to play a major part in opposing sectarian killings and death threats.

Most if not all of what has happened in Stormont,

would have happened anyway under direct rule ministers.

The privatisation of public services is British government policy, and went ahead anyway, whether it was Peter Robinson, Martin McGuinness, Bairbre De Bruin or Sean Farren that was doing it.

Accepted

All the main political parties have accepted that the "free market", that is capitalism and profit, is the best way to run society.

In fact, making Northern Ireland into a model capitalist economy, with low wages, fewer trade union rights for workers, massive handouts for international corporations and low business taxes, were just about the only things that everyone in the Executive agreed upon.

That is what is on offer from those who say the Assembly is the only show in town.

But we need a massive redistribution of wealth in

this society. That redistribution won't come from the Assembly.

It is now clear that the communal politicians prefer to have us fight each other over which community is getting the crumbs, than lead a fight for more resources, more jobs and more housing.

The alternative, no matter who is in Castle Buildings or Stormont, is to encourage the struggles by working people against this agenda.

That needs politics which aims at encouraging the unity of working class people, Protestant and Catholic, against the rich minority who control this society and who have an interest in keeping us divided.

That means rejecting the idea that we should define ourselves by our loyalty to any state, Irish or British, and instead aim to build a society of genuine solidarity and equality.

The opposition to Bush and Blair's war has an obvious link to the immediate struggles by firefighters and

hospital workers.

Blair alone is spending an extra £4 billion on the military this year, while he says there is no money for public services. It is the job of socialists to make those connections and build a movement based on them.

Frustrated

Those who say the Assembly is the only option, only offer a future of frustrated hopes and sectarian wrangling.

Breaking the sectarian mould means creating a political alternative that rejects sectarianism as the basis of politics and fights for a different future.

That is the only hope for dealing with the rotten legacy of partition and division that the British and Irish ruling classes delivered to us.

The latest crisis shows that there is no shortcut to a society of equality and justice as long as it is left in the hands of the same governments, politicians, police and civil servants who created the problem.

Comment

When banks get in debt

— by ALEX CALLINICOS

THE WORLD media's attention has been so focused on George W Bush's plans to attack Iraq that little notice has been taken of the fact that the global economic crisis is getting worse. Take the three biggest economies—the US, Japan and Germany.

Japan has been experiencing a serious economic slump for a decade now. At the heart of this slump is the plight of the major banks, which play a key role in financing industrial investment. During the speculative "bubble economy" that Japan enjoyed in the late 1980s these banks lent massively.

As a result the banks have lost huge amounts of money in bad loans that will never be repaid. A few weeks ago the Japanese central bank announced that it was going to start buying bank shares to prevent the financial system from collapsing. This forced the hand of the prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi, who the Bank of Japan blames for doing nothing about the crisis.

He appointed a new head of the Financial Services Agency with a brief to reorganise the banking system. But the danger is that this restructuring will unleash a wave of bankruptcies that will push Japan into an even deeper slump.

Fallen

Now Germany, the economic powerhouse of the European Union, is beginning to face what some see as a Japanese-style crisis. Nearly one in ten people are unemployed in Germany, with almost one in five in the east. Deutsche Bank recently estimated that the German economy will grow by just 0.1 percent this year. The DAX index of leading shares has fallen by 48 percent in 2002, the worst performance of any leading stock-market.

The falling stockmarket has hit the German banks very hard. The value of their shareholdings has fallen, and they are carrying a heavy burden of bad loans.

As in the case of Japan, German banks play a key role in funding industrial investment, so their crisis affects the entire econo-

my. The situation is made worse by the European Growth and Stability Pact, which forms part of the basis on which the euro was brought in.

The pact forces governments in the euro zone to keep public expenditure and government borrowing within very tightly defined limits whose aim is to produce balanced budgets.

This stops governments from reacting to economic slowdowns by spending more to prevent a slump in employment and output.

Wim Duisenberg, the unelected chief of the European Central Bank, attacked countries like France for ignoring the Growth and Stability Pact. Unfortunately, the recently re-elected Red-Green coalition in Germany is strongly committed to maintaining the Growth and Stability Pact, even though it is one of the few left-of-centre governments still holding office in the European Union.

Deflation

Some economists fear that Germany faces the kind of deflation that Japan has experienced in recent years. Deflation means falling prices, which increase the burden of debts like mortgages and therefore discourage spending.

"I have been one of the people who have been saying deflation definitely could not happen; but I'm getting nervous," Charles Posen of the Institute of International Economics in Washington told the *Financial Times*. "With the coming slowdown in the US, with the demise of Japan, the stakes of Europe making a mistake are much bigger than they were."

The US itself is suffering from the collapse of its own speculative bubble economy at the end of the 1990s. New investment is very low because so much money was spent at the height of the boom creating productive capacity that can't now be profitably used.

The US economy has been kept going by high levels of consumer spending. This has been encouraged by low interest rates that have encouraged a housing boom.

Sooner or later the property market will collapse, removing one of the last props holding the US up.

The wild card in all this is the economic impact of war in Iraq. Any serious disruption in oil supplies from the Middle East would push prices sharply upwards. In all the great recessions of the past 30 years it has been an oil crisis that precipitated global slump. Our rulers are steering the world economy into stormy waters.

Stop Bush's war... Stop Bush's war... Stop Bush's war...

Iraq: the carve up

Boosting US power

A GRUBBY carve-up of Iraq's vast oil reserves lies behind George Bush and Tony Blair's rhetoric about the moral case for war. And the *Financial Times* said it all: "Putin Drives Hard Bargain With US Over Iraq's Oil". Putin is not alone in horse trading with the US over the spoils from any attack on Iraq.

"It's pretty straightforward," says former CIA director R James Woolsey. "France and Russia have oil companies and interests in Iraq."

"They should be told that if they are of assistance in moving Iraq toward decent government, we'll do the best we can to ensure that the new government and US companies work closely with them."

Russia's biggest oil company, Lukoil, has a \$4 billion stake in Iraq's West Kurna oilfield.

Other Russian oil firms have similar investments.

"These deals could become worthless if Moscow tries to thwart US aims," says the *Financial*

Times. "Asked whether oil was at the top of Moscow's agenda in negotiations with the US, Lukoil chief Mr Alekparov said, 'Yes, of course'."

French oil company TotalFinaElf has major stakes in Iraq, and hopes to get its hands on the Majnoon oilfield.

China's National Petroleum Corporation has signed a deal for access to Iraq's North Rumailah oilfield.

US and British firms are drooling over Iraq's oil.

"Iraq possesses huge reserves of oil, reserves I'd love Chevron to have access to," says Chevron boss Kenneth T Derr.

US vice-president and oil millionaire Dick Cheney wrote the *US National Energy Report*, which talks of the US's "global vulnerability to disruption" of oil supplies and fears "adversaries" getting "undue potential influence".

The US wants to control Iraq's oil. Other powers want a slice of it before giving UN blessing to war.

THE REAL aim of the US war drive is to use its overwhelming military power to show it can enforce its will anywhere on the globe.

By removing Saddam Hussein the US hopes to show that any state which does not bow down before it faces destruction.

Bush has signalled he has others in his sights. His "axis of evil" list was Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Other "rogue" states include Syria, Libya and Cuba. In the longer term the US is preparing to challenge China. The oil-rich Middle East is a key objec-

tive for the US. That is not just about ensuring US supplies of oil, but also about the US having a stranglehold over those supplies. This will allow it to dominate other potential economic rivals which depend on the oil-such as Europe, China or Japan.

Argues

Dick Cheney is George Bush's vice-president. As defence secretary under Bush's father in 1992 he spelt out the US's global strategy. "Our strategy must now focus on precluding the emergence of any potential future competitor."

The US National Security Strategy, published last month, argues that the US must use its "unparalleled

military strength to fight for the "single sustainable model" of "free enterprise" across the world. "The only path to peace and security is the path of action," Bush said in June this year. And that meant being "ready for pre-emptive action" anywhere in the world.

A US Space Command report. The Long Range Plan, called for the US to build up "war fighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict" to "protect US interests and investment". US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee, "The US must be able to impose its will including the occupation of an adversary's territory and change of its regime."

Why Ireland ba

THE RECENT protest in Shannon organised by the Irish Anti War Movement highlight the co-operation the Irish government has given to George Bush's military effort.

Hundreds of air movements have been permitted through Irish airspace on behalf of the US military. These include refuelling of fighter aircraft as well as civilian aircraft on charter to the US for logistical purposes connected with the military build up.

The reason that his is taking place is that for all their talk of "safeguarding neutrality" the Irish ruling class is a junior partner in Western imperialism.

Capitalism was never purely a matter of economic competition. In order to defend markets and find sources of raw materials, the major capitalists look to their governments to defend their interests—by force of arms if necessary.

Of course not all states are equal. The major powers, and in particular, the USA militarily dominate the globe in defence of their economic interests.

It is obvious that the oil in the Middle East is a major motivation for the war on Iraq. All the big imperialist powers—the permanent members of the UN Security Council—have major oil interest in the region.

Disagreements between the US-Britain and the other major powers over the terms of the war reflect a cynical concern of each that they will not lose out in the carve up.

But it is not simply about oil. For multinational capital to scour the world in search of profits it requires that local populations or regimes are prevented as far as possible from getting in the way.

The Irish state has economic interests to defend. Giant firms like Smurfits, AIB, Goldman, Cement

Roadstone, etc operate as multinationals round the world. They do demand political and military protection.

That is why the Irish government is keen to co-operate with the great powers. It is a junior partner in Western imperialism.

If it wants to get the protection of the imperialist powers for its economic interests it must play its part in defending the world's capitalist order against any disruption.

Before Saddam Hussein was declared the new Hitler, he was a key Western ally in the fight against Iran. His regime was armed and supported by the US, Britain, France and Germany.

Ireland played its part.

The United Nation

MANY PEOPLE hope that the United Nations (UN) can be used to stop an attack on Iraq.

Others believe that if the UN backs war then it could be OK.

The UN cannot be trusted to stop Bush and Blair. It is dominated by the five main powers—the US, France, Britain, Russia and China.

They are all willing to use brutal methods to get their way. When they act together they are no less brutal.

China, Russia and France are engaged in a deadly oil carve-up with the US over Iraq. They want to make sure they still have access to Iraq's vast oil reserves before giving UN blessing to war.

China and Russia have been pursuing their own "war on terror" over the last year. China has stepped up

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Palestinians pay the blood price

AT LEAST 14 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded when Israel launched a major military incursion into the Khan Younis refugee camp in Gaza.

The raid was ordered by Israel's prime minister Ariel Sharon. Israeli settlers near the West Bank town of Nablus also went on the rampage this month, killing 24 year old Hani Mustafa, a Palestinian farmer who was picking olives.

Sharon was given the green light for the murderous assault on the Palestinian territory by US president George W Bush.

Bush scuppered any serious moves to get peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

US officials want Israel to tone down its calls for war on Iraq for fear of undermining their attempts to get support for it from the Arab Gulf states.

Bush is prepared to let Israel get on with its war on the Palestinians if that is the price for its co-operation.

Stop Bush's war... Stop Bush's war... Stop Bush's war

the deadly oil



AS THE news of the bombing in Bali broke an anti-war demonstration took place in Melbourne, Australia. Around 45,000 protesters joined the march

up power

military strength" to fight for the "single sustainable model" of "free enterprise" across the world. "The only path to peace and security is the path of action," Bush said in June this year. And that meant being "ready for pre-emptive action" anywhere in the world.

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nd backs Bush

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The Irish government provided massive increases in export credit insurance for the export of beef to Iraq despite the fact that Iraq was known to be on the point of default. The tax payer picked up the price; two giant Irish beef firms, Goodman International and Hibernia Meats, made the profits and the friendly butcher of Baghdad was given a help out.

The pretence of Irish neutrality has sometimes proved useful for the imperialist powers too.

The use of "neutral" Irish troops in Somalia, Lebanon and Kosovo has been a useful way of disguising the imperialist nature of the intervention.

But more recently the

pressure has been on for the Irish to even remove this fig-leaf.

Irish troops have served with NATO in Western occupation of Bosnia, propping up partition of that country and the UN colonial administration.

The creation of a 60,000 strong European Rapid Reaction Force to which Ireland will supply a large troop contingent and the re-equipping of the Irish army to ensure compatibility with European forces is another step on this road.

Capitalism has always needed the threat of force behind the hidden hand of the market. Irish capitalism is therefore necessarily a junior partner in Western imperialism.

repression of minorities who want independence. Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, has tightened the savage repression against the Chechen people.

The US has turned a blind eye to this in return for Russia and China backing Bush's "war on terror". It recently placed a pro-independence Uighur Muslim organisation in China on its "Foreign Terrorist Organisation List". States

outside the Security Council also come under intense US pressure. The US has a military presence in 120 of the 189 UN member states.

As *Socialist Worker* went to press it was unclear whether the UN would back Bush's war, what was clear was that Ireland with a seat on the Security Council has done nothing to oppose the war and backed Bush by opening up Shannon to the US military.

Iraq's false opposition

AFTER SADDAM Hussein got 100% of the votes in the recent "election", Bush claimed his planned war on Iraq will bring democracy to the region.

But the forces the US has backed to oppose Saddam Hussein Ba'athist regime don't have democratic records.

At the end of the Gulf War in 1991, President Bush senior called on Iraqi dissidents to rebel, implying that the U.S. would provide air cover. The uprisings received no support and Iraqi military retaliation butchered thousands of rebelling Kurds in the north and Shi'ites in the south.

Since then the US has spent \$200 million backing seven oppositional groups in Iraq.

The Iraqi National Council is an umbrella organisation that has little or no internal support. Inept and corrupt it has failed in three attempted coups. US backers described it as "the gang that couldn't shoot straight".

In 1996 a covert U.S. military training operation in

northern Iraq degenerated into feuds between different opposition groups allowing Saddam Hussein's forces to crush the INC, forcing its operations to come to a standstill.

INC leader Ahmed Chalabi was indicted in Jordan for embezzling millions from a bank he once headed.

Defected

The Iraqi National Accord (INA), consists primarily of military and security officers who defected from Iraq. It is run by CIA, MI-6, and Saudi intelligence operatives and infiltrated by Iraqi intelligence.

There are about 1,500 former Iraqi military officers in exile who might be used to dress up a US-led invasion. Most, if not all, of these defecting officers were involved at some time in carrying out atrocities on behalf of the regime.

There are 25 million Kurds in the region, mainly concentrated in northern Iraq, stretching over borders into Turkey and Iran, with smaller numbers in Syria and former Soviet republics.

Since 1991, because of sanctions and the no-fly zone over their lands, they have

acquired a lot of autonomy in northern Iraq.

The two major Kurdish nationalist parties—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)—each receive money and support from both the US and Iran.

In May 1994, the two Kurdish parties began fighting over territory, revenues from duties levied at the Turkish border, and control over the Kurdish regional government in Arbil.

In 1996, the KDP joined forces with Baghdad in order to fight the PUK, and thus allowed Iraq's victory that year over the PUK in Arbil. Two years later, the PUK itself collaborated with Baghdad in order to defeat the KDP.

The two Islamic groups, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) is based in Tehran and the Islamic Movement of the Iraqi Kurdistan, is backed by Iran and based in Halabja, site of a 1988 chemical attack by the Iraqi army that killed thousands.

Despite links with Islamic militants these groups have received US backing in the past but are now out of favour in Washington.

In Afghanistan the US

could rely on a local forces like the Northern Alliance. But in Iraq even this rag-bag of war lords is not available. As US Marine General Anthony Zinni said in February 2000:

"I don't see an opposition group that has the viability to overthrow Saddam... Even if we had Saddam gone, we could end up with 15, 20, 90 groups competing for power... Bay of Pigs could turn into Bay of Goats."

Planning

According to Stratfor, a strategic forecasting think tank based in the America, the US is considering plans to install King Abdullah of Jordan on a merged Iraq and Jordan.

US strategists believe a restoration of the monarchy and a fusion with Jordan could provide a strong pro-US state which could prevent the influence of Iran growing and provide a regime that would safeguard US domination of the region.

Whatever the final outcome, it is clear that freedom for the Kurds, Shi'as and Marsh Arabs, and democracy for the people of the area, is the last thing on the minds of US strategists as they head in to war.

ed Nations is no solution

They are all willing to use brutal methods to get their way. When they act together they are no less brutal.

China, Russia and France are engaged in a deadly oil carve-up with the US over Iraq. They want to make sure they still have access to Iraq's vast oil reserves before giving UN blessing to war.

China and Russia have been pursuing their own "war on terror" over the last year. China has stepped up

Indonesian bomb attack

What's behind the tragedy in Bali?



A MILLION workers took to the streets in 120 Italian cities on Saturday 19 October as part of an eight hour general strike called by Italy's biggest union, the CGIL. The strike was in protest at attacks by Italian prime minister Berlusconi on the job security rights of workers. This attack could lead to 280,000 jobs being cut in health, education and other public services. Most major cities were shut down by the strike, including Rome, Milan, Turin, Naples and Palermo. Irish unions should do the same here!

THERE ARE plenty of people in Indonesia who have good reason to hate Western governments and big business.

Tragically, some of them may have directed their anger in awful fashion at ordinary holiday-makers. Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous state and stretches over hundreds of islands.

Its economy has been devastated by the huge financial crisis that swept Asia in 1997. Millions of people were thrown out of work, with many facing hunger.

Indonesia's currency collapsed. It couldn't pay its enormous debts. Mass demonstrations followed. An occupation of parliament and clashes with the army drove Indonesia's dictator General Suharto from power in 1998.

Many people still live in dire poverty in Indonesia.

This is because the current president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, is continuing with an austerity programme backed by the International Monetary Fund.

Indonesia's government is also continuing its repression of movements demanding independence, such as in the oil-rich Aceh province. This comes after Indonesia was finally forced to leave East Timor in 1999, though not before unleashing a final wave of terror.

In the wake of last week's bombing the media have focused on Islamic organisations in Indonesia. Islam is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the population.

People looked to religion for some hope in the face of poverty and oppression

brought by colonialism.

Holland had ruled Indonesia with a brutal hand from the 17th and 18th centuries until 1945. The West also encouraged Islamist organisations as a counterweight to the influence of the left in the 1960s.

Now many of the main Islamic organisations are working with the government, and support its IMF-backed policies.

Indonesia's vice-president is leader of one of the country's main Islamic parties.

But some Islamist groups have reacted to the continuing poverty that blights millions of lives in Indonesia by lashing out, usually at people who have no responsibility for the suffering of ordinary people.

So in some areas Islamist groups have targeted Christians, for example. And some may have been behind last week's bombing.

Most of the tourists killed were from Australia. That country's right wing prime minister, John Howard, has sought to cynically exploit the horror of the bombing.

His talk of human rights sits badly alongside his record of turning boats with desperate refugees back from Australia and throwing those who do get to Australia into brutal detention centres.

Howard also sent Australian troops to fight alongside the US and Britain in Afghanistan.

Australia's big businesses are key players in carving up the region's oil and mineral reserves. Howard now threatens "action" and is stepping up his support for George Bush's "war on terror".

If last week's bombing is used for that there is only one certain result. It will fuel

more poverty and more bitterness against the major Western powers, and some of the anger will rebound in the form of more terrorist attacks.

● **DUTCH** colonialists seized the area in the 17th and 18th centuries. Famine was a regular occurrence, while spices, coffee and sugar were sucked out for Western markets at vast profit to Dutch business.

● **INDONESIA** was occupied by Japan during the Second World War and, with Japan's defeat, Holland sought to regain control.

● **NATIONALIST** forces led by Ahmed Sukarno fought a bitter four year struggle, and succeeded in winning independence in 1949. The nationalist regime balanced between social forces—the army, Islamic groups and the three million strong Communist Party.

● **IN 1965** there was a crisis after the regime nationalised the oil industry, threatening the Anglo-Dutch multinational Shell, which had a monopoly on Indonesia's oil.

The army, encouraged by the US, seized power. Some 700,000 people were killed.

● **GENERAL** Suharto emerged as the key figure and ruled as a dictator, backed by the West. The US backed his 1975 invasion of East Timor, which saw 300,000 people killed over the next 20 years.

● **SUHARTO'S** regime was finally toppled by mass revolt in 1998.

Brazil

A vote for change

LUIS INACIO "Lula" da Silva came within a hair's breadth of winning the Brazilian presidential election. The former left wing socialist and strike leader got 47 percent of votes, almost double that of any other candidate.

Lula fell just short of the 50 percent he needed to win outright, and will now face a run-off on 27 October against Jose Serra.

Serra was the candidate backed by the outgoing president, Cardoso, getting just 24 percent of votes on Sunday.

There is massive disillusionment with eight years of the neo-liberal policies pursued by Cardoso's government. Lula and his Workers Party have moved to the right in recent years.

Imposed

Lula has said he will honour Brazil's massive foreign debt, and pledged to accept the harsh restrictions on public spending imposed in an International Monetary Fund package agreed

by the current government.

Despite this, if Lula were to win the second round it would awaken enormous expectations of change among ordinary Brazilians.

Lula has won the overwhelming bulk of his support from workers and the poor.

"He will give us better housing, more jobs. Brazil will finally have a champion of the poor as its president," said Marcia dos Santos, who works as a maid in Rio de Janeiro.

Such hopes are likely to be dashed by a Lula-led government. But they could translate into demands for change, which could go much further than Lula or

Brazil's rich want.

A victory for Lula would encourage all those resisting the effects of neo-liberal policies across Latin America. Between now and the second round of voting Lula will face a barrage of hostility.

Instead of seeking to mobilise the millions of workers and poor behind his campaign, Lula is likely to try and secure victory by promising that he does not really threaten those at the top.

Brazil's workers and poor will need much more than that if the hopes for change that Lula's vote reflected is to become a reality

South Africa

Unions lead resistance to privatisation

HUNDREDS OF thousands of workers went on strike across South Africa against the policies of the ANC government. Bosses and the government claimed the strike was a flop but the Cosatu union federation, which called the action, disputed their figures.

Cosatu leaders said that up to 60 percent of their members had taken part in the strike.

Rallies in all the major

urban centres saw thousands, in some places tens of thousands, of workers take to the streets. Cosatu called the action against privatisation, job losses and the rising cost of living.

Around 100,000 jobs have been lost since the mid-1990s because of privatisation. The ANC is ready to launch joint ventures and full privatisation of a string of services including electricity and telecoms.

The strike has led to a bitter political row throughout the country. After the strike ANC president Thabo Mbeki said that the Cosatu leaders' aim was to "objectively seek to defeat the ANC and the

revolutionary masses of our country".

Workers are quite right to fight back against policies which have worsened unemployment, impoverished communities and tied the provision of basic services to the profits of the multinationals. Union leaders reacted angrily to Mbeki's assault. Cosatu president Willie Madisha said, "You may call us whatever you like—ultra-left, ultra-right.

"All we know is that we are ultra-hungry.

"If those who are ultra-rich do not respond to the people who put them in that position, there will be political instability in the country."

Footsteps from another world

By DAVE LORDAN

DÁITHÍ Ó HÓGÁIN lectures in folklore in UCD and has been actively involved in the Irish left for four decades.

Footsteps From Another World is his fourth volume of poetry, a lengthy, energetic collection in which the flora and fauna of our mythical heritage are brought to life in a series of colloquially phrased narratives rich in imagery and evocation. The poems are populated by a cast of heroes and druids, fairies and seers drawn from the legendary cycles of the Celts and the mysterious aboriginals who preceded them.

Teeming

They are set among a primeval zoology of ancient woodland and hillside teeming with the life of half-remembered creatures like mammoths, stags, bisons and wild boars.

All these things are of course dying off or have passed away completely, saved only by the willingness of enthusiasts to dedicate their lives to the task of reconstructing the history of the imagination by mining the dark recesses of the 'folk' memory.

And so these poems are underpinned by darker reflections, which resonate sharply in a contemporary world where we are constantly reminded of the possibility of our own annihilation, our own reduction to ash and artefact, to document and bone.

Unconquerable

But there is more than just the ice of extinction binding this collection together. There is the fire of the unconquerable too, of times so vivid they persist beyond their own historical limits to inform the powerful synthesising imaginations of artists and other practical dreamers.

Footsteps is a stirring work of imaginative resurrection by a poet cutting against the grain of a ruling culture which needs us to believe that we have nothing to learn from our ancestors and that things have always been the same:

*But nobody ever was dead,
but a poet and a brother
could make him rise again...*

Return ticket from Welsh

By JULES BROWN

TEN YEARS on, the characters from *Trainspotting* have returned, this time to make a porn movie. Irvine Welsh sets up a series of neatly timed coincidences to bring them back to Edinburgh along with a new character, the beautiful but bulimic student Nikki Fuller-Smith.

Struggling

Renton, the one who ran off with the money in *Trainspotting*, is using the proceeds to run a successful dance club in Amsterdam. Spud, still struggling to stay off heroin, learns about

working class history. Meanwhile, Simon "Sick Boy" Williamson thinks a porn movie with "a great script and really sound production values" is the way to make money.

Disgust

Nikki is to be the star and her enthusiasm for the role is matched by the disgust of her feminist flatmate Lauren.

The two discuss women and pornography as the movie is made.

Although the general conclusion is that porn is degrading, Lauren's arguments are weak and moralistic.

Porno is clever and engaging. The overall impression of the book is that humanity is both brutal and unchanging.

They can't fence in the movement

NAOMI KLEIN worked on her first book, *No Logo*, in the four years before the great anti-capitalist protests in Seattle. It was published just after and—according to the *Guardian*—sold 180,000 copies in Britain last year alone.

Now she has a new book out. It is a collection of the various pieces of journalism she has written since *No Logo* propelled her to the forefront of the movement against capitalist globalisation.

For those who read about and participate in the movement, many of the pieces in this collection will be familiar. Arranged chronologically, they contain Klein's reflections on the protests at Seattle, Washington DC, Los Angeles and Prague.

There are also pieces against the North American Free Trade Agreement, genetically modified organisms, violence against protesters, and in praise of the Zapatistas in Mexico and Italy's social centres. She is particularly effective when sticking the knife into the supposed benefits of free trade. She writes:

"Whenever I hear the

phrase 'free trade', I can't help picturing the caged factories I visited in the Philippines and Indonesia that are all surrounded by gates, watchtowers and soldiers—to keep the highly subsidised products from leaking out and the union organisers from getting in." She is also good when discussing whether the movement is really "anti" globalisation at all.

Instead Klein says the protesters and activists are internationalists who are fighting a particular model of globalisation, the neo-liberal model which globalises privatisation and deregulation, and boosts corporations' profits.

But this is not the book for those who want in-depth analysis of either the system or where the movement goes next.

The articles repeat her argument that the diversity and dynamism of the movement are alone creating an alternative economic model. This is not enough.

The movement faces powerful obstacles, not least a world system of states whose top dog, the US, is about to use its military might to decimate Iraq.

Fences and Windows is more of a good introduction. It'd make a great Christmas present.

● *Fences and Windows* by Naomi Klein is published by Flamingo, price £8.99 (stg).



SEATTLE 1999—the birth of a new movement

No escape from desolation row

DON'T EXPECT much sunlight to filter into the cinema if you go and see Mike Leigh's new film, *All or Nothing*.

The film is an almost relentlessly bleak portrayal of life on a run down estate. Phil, played by Timothy Spall, is a taxi driver who has sunk into deep depression. His common-law wife makes more money than him.

He suffers the humiliation of borrowing bits of change from his own family to pay the rental on the cab radio.

Characters vent their frustrations on other people. Phil's neighbour and fellow cab driver Ron shouts at

other road users even when the dents his cab gets are his fault.

Ron's unemployed daughter hangs around fruitlessly goading and taunting the other young people.

Phil takes his feelings of inadequacy out on himself. He has let himself go, no longer caring about his appearance, or able to get up in the mornings.

His sense of powerlessness is summed up in his philosophy: "Tide comes in, tide goes out. You're born, you die. That's it."

His withdrawn daughter, who cleans at a care home, reads in her bedroom. His unemployed son swears and hits out at people for no reason.

Poverty and misery have seeped into their world, devouring even their

ability to communicate with each other. Only their stoical neighbour Maureen seems able to look on life with a cheery, kindly smile.

Otherwise the characters' responses to their own predicament are pitiable. This is especially so when it comes to the rather one-dimensional minor characters.

There is little sense of the basic dignity of working class life that you find in, say, a novel by James Kelman. Leigh overstates the desolation and emptiness by creating characters barely able to do anything except stare at their shoes.

But when there is a chance to confront the lovelessness and loss of respect in Phil's household, there is a palpable sense of transformation.

—MARK HARVEY

A class apart

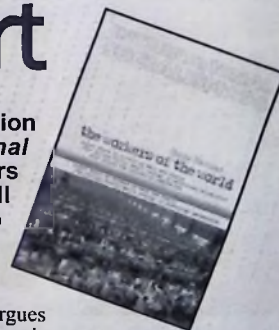
THE NEW edition of *International Socialism* offers a reply to all those who argue that the working class is dead.

Chris Harman argues that the working class is bigger than it ever has been before on a global scale and that it continues to play the vital role in the struggle for a decent society.

August Nimtz looks at Karl Marx and Frederick Engels' account of the need for socialist organisation.

Nimtz stresses the need for organisation today.

Mike Kidron returns to the journal after more than 20 years absence to analyse



the wastefulness of capitalism in the 21st century.

John Bellamy Foster offers a devastating response to ecologists who say that Marx contributed nothing to environmental issues.

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**where
we
stand**

The present system has led to huge inequalities of wealth. The greed for profit is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

That cannot be done on a gradual piecemeal basis. Socialists can use parliament to expose this system but fundamental social change will not come through parliament.

The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy. They all ensure there is one law for the rich and another for the rest. To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based much greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth. Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance. We oppose this war and see imperialism as the greatest enemy of peace.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression. This divides and weakens the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We stand for: free contraception and free, legalised abortion and the right to divorce; the complete separation of church and state, an end to church control over schools and hospitals; an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians.

FOR AN END TO RACISM

We fight to end to racism and anti-traveller bigotry. We oppose immigration controls which are always racist. Asylum seekers and refugees should have full rights of citizenship, including the right to work. We oppose deportations.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

The Good Friday Agreement brought an end to armed struggle but it also institutionalised sectarianism by setting Catholic and Protestant communities in competition with each other for under-resourced services. The communal politicians from Sinn Féin to the DUP push policies of privatisation—while building a political base from the competition between 'both communities'. We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government. Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction.' We want to see an Irish workers republic where all workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

OUR WORLD IS NOT FOR SALE

We oppose the sell-offs of public services to private interests. We fight for direct labour. We want properly-funded, publicly run services democratically controlled from below. We participate in the wider anti-capitalist movement.

FOR A FIGHTING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Trade unions exist to defend workers' interests. We oppose

news & reports/politics/industry/the unions (01) 8722682 /fax (01) 872 3838 e-mail swp@clubi.ie

PHONE REPORTS ABOUT STRIKES/LOCAL CAMPAIGNS/PROTESTS

Teachers

ASTI

Fight or decent pay—without strings

A SPECIAL convention of ASTI delegates met in Dublin.

Delegates voted to ballot members on the €1,369 offer for substitution and supervision that has recently been made pensionable.

This should cause a lot of debate as already in the INTO where the deal is currently being implemented many problems are appearing and criticism is being voiced loudly at the October quarterly meetings.

Replace

The voluntary nature of the deal is somewhat questionable as primary teachers are only allowed to opt out if they themselves find someone to replace them.

Huge controversy is raging over the failure to make the payment available to home school liaison officers who have often done supervision.

The pensionability

aspect has also caused anger because of the lack of any retrospective recognition of supervision already done.

Problems are also arising over the issue of teachers on longer term sick leave, where teachers will only receive S&S payment for 39 days.

The ASTI membership will also ballot on the issue of the continuing ban on implementation of new syllabi in home economics and biology.

The fulltime leadership of the ASTI who have always been less than happy with the member's militant strategy are claiming that this action leaves the union open to legal action under the Industrial Relations Act.

It is no coincidence that every right wing trade union leader has the IR act on the tip of their tongue whenever they want to discourage members from taking action.

There is a big battle ahead within the ASTI. Democracy in the unions is vitally important and annual convention is in a lot of ways the cornerstone of that democracy.

Pause

They have demanded a pay pause from the forthcoming partnership talks followed by pay awards that are less than the rate of inflation.

All of this puts the union leadership in a huge quandary.

They desperately want to keep partnership going but know they cannot sell it on these con-

Last year that convention voted to continue the fight for decent pay outside of ICTU and the benchmarking process.

It is clear that Charlie Lennon and the unelected leadership of ASTI are organising hard against the elected representatives.

The fact that they are the main force behind the push to ballot is a clear indication that they want another chance to try and prevail.

Ultimately, they want to return to the fold and rejoin the Geraghtys, McLonnes and Carrs of this world at the table of social partnership.

ASTI members should use the ballots as an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the fight for decent pay with no strings attached.

TUI

Ballot for industrial action

TUI MEMBERS will ballot on industrial action in protest at cuts in teaching hours for part time staff and restrictions on

course provision arising from the €3 million cut-backs that are currently being implemented in the DIT.

TUI members are already refusing to teach some overcrowded practical classes on health and safety grounds.

INTO

Government fails children

by CREA RYDER, INTO rep for St. Vincents

AS A result of two court judgements, the O'Donoghue and Sinnott cases, children with severe and profound learning disabilities now have a right to an education.

This was a victory for parents and guardians of these children who had been deprived of education up to this point.

Before these judgements these children would have been cared for under the auspices of the Department of Health.

The Department of

Education and Science (DES) was forced to provide education. But they supplied the bare minimum.

The DES failed to make adequate provision for children who would have serious medical needs in an educational setting.

They failed to address question like, what type of space was needed, what type of specialised equipment was needed, moving children from a care situation to an education situation etc.

Insult

To add insult to injury, the Department of Health has attempted to cut back the amount of care these children would have been entitled to before education

started to 11 months.

All these problems are now manifesting themselves in St. Vincents

Local management have added to the problems by their failure over the last seven years to integrate health and education.

Staff relations have deteriorated.

This has resulted in the majority of health staff resigning and blame being placed on the education staff.

Management have buried their head in the sand and ignored the problem.

A facilitator has recently been brought in to try and sort out the problem.

Although this may mean some improvement, it lets local management off the hook who are the real cause of the problem.

Ultimately the DES and Dept of Health need to provide full health and education facilities for these children.

ISSUES FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

After October 4th: We need a 24 hour general strike

OCTOBER 4th saw one of the biggest mobilisations of workers on a political issue in recent times.

The demand was certainly modest. In response to the mistreatment of Irish Glass Bottle workers and those at Peerless Rugs, union leaders called for protest action to win a legal minimum of three weeks severance pay for every year a redundant worker was employed.

Nevertheless, the employers are digging in their heels.

Less than a week after the protests were held, IGB management came back to workers with a derisory offer that did not even meet the Labour Court recommendation.

The employers had taken out a legal injunction to end an occupation and now felt they held all

the cards.

They told workers they had to take it or leave it.

The Irish trade union movement is entering a new situation—and its leadership is being tested as never before.

The employers—organised in IBEC—are determined to use the economic slow down to roll back any modest gains workers made in the boom.

They want to place the cost of the new recession firmly on the shoulders of workers.

Their strategy therefore was to fire a warning shot over the bows of the employers.

The problem is that they cannot fire very well.

October 4th was only a modest success because the union leaders did not go all out to build it.

They were so frightened by the Industrial Relations Act that they did not call for full-scale strike action.

They were too frightened to call together mass meetings of shop stewards in case they might move in even more radical directions.

The result was that in Dublin 8,000 workers came out—far less than could have been the case if there had been a serious mobilisation.

In Cork, Limerick and Galway the numbers were in hundreds rather than thousands.

The one solid success was in Waterford because it was built on very different lines.

Here there were meetings of up to one hundred shop stewards to organise the action.

Plans to hold a separate protest on the industrial estate away from the main gathering in town were argued against and the Left won.

The vacillating nature of the union leadership means that no plans have been drawn up for a follow on from the October 4th protest.

As one activist on the Waterford Trades Council put it:

"We got our members out but now they are asking what did they lose pay for if there is not a wider strategy?"

"We want to see action around the rest of the country to build on October 4th. We cannot let the IGB and Peerless Rugs workers in the lurch."

What is required now is a serious push in the union for a 24-hour general strike.

Workers have more than enough grievances to advance.

■ There is firstly the whole issue of redundancies and severance pay.

The bosses should not be allowed to make huge profits in the Celtic Tiger boom and then throw workers on the scrap heap in the recession.

■ There is the issue of health cuts—which are due to get far worse when McCreavy announces more in December.

The annual conference of SIPTU agreed to call major regional demonstration on this issue at its conference last year. But nothing has been done.

■ And there is the whole issue of political corruption.

All the major unions have passed resolutions calling for a day of action to demand jail sentences for corrupt politicians.

Rank and file activists must turn up the pressure to agitate for this stoppage.

It is crucial for taking on the new offensive of the employers.

IFI

Fight to save jobs

SOME 200 IFI workers will be thrown onto the dole queues for Christmas. Indirectly another 400 workers will lose their jobs.

Workers at the IFI plant in Cork, which produces ammonia for fertilisers, are disgusted at the treatment they received from management and the government.

The workers learned of the closure through the pages of the *Guardian* newspaper.

Since June workers have been led up the garden path into believing that their jobs would be saved. A rescue package had been prepared by unions and management, which involved savings in capital expenditure and wage cuts. This package has been ignored by Mary Harney as it appears that they were never interested in saving the jobs at IFI.

Jim Shealy has worked at IFI for 21 years and has been a SIPTU shop steward for much of that time. Jim spoke to *Socialist Worker* about what happened:

"We had been led into a false sense of security the last few months by management and the Department of Enterprise which is the main stakeholder.

"Wage cuts had been agreed after huge arguments amongst workers, many of whom were in principle opposed to a wage cut.

"Now all this humiliation is for nothing."

ICI, the other main shareholder in the company has wanted to pull out of Cobh for a long time, hoping to asset-strip the plant and concentrate on Arklow and Belfast which are more profitable.

IFI accounts for over 40 percent of fertilisers used nationally, and while poor summer weather has meant slow sales this year, there is no reason to suggest sales would not pick up next year.

Many Irish farmers would also disagree with the company's claim that fertiliser prices in Europe have never been as low in a long time.

Unfortunately SIPTU leaders have already given up on the notion of a fight to

save jobs and have told workers that their best hope is a decent redundancy package and they should "co-operate" with the liquidator.

Mary Harney has said that she hopes workers will behave "fairly and honourably" with the liquidation of the company but as Jim Shealy points out "The words fair and honourable are not normally associated with Mary Harney and most here do not trust her at her word."

SIPTU workers have realised that they are working in a plant with two tanks both of which have 25,000 tonnes of ammonia each, and are also in possession of 10m tonnes of urea which greatly strengthens their bargaining power in getting

their entitlements.

They should push for occupation of the existing plant and save the jobs.

SIPTU election

THE election for the General Secretary of SIPTU has ended in a victory for the Right. Joe O Flynn received 57,592 votes to 52,293 for the Noel Dowling, the favoured candidate of the current Geraghty leadership.

Flynn is the Regional Secretary in Cork, which had one of the lowest turnouts for October 4th. He forged an alliance with Brendan Hayes, the Dublin Regional Secretary who is expected to run in a subsequent election.

Like the rest of the current SIPTU leadership, Dowling can occasionally talk left. He had argued for example in Waterford

This is the second big blow to the town of Cobh in recent times after Irish Steel earlier this year.

for a major day of action to show the employers that the union meant business.

But like that leadership his left rhetoric always translates into organised pessimism.

Because of globalisation, workers are supposed to have no choice but to collaborate with the employers.

So disgracefully he called on Aer Lingus workers to oppose the pilots strike. And like the rest of leadership he called for a Yes vote on Nice.

The rank and file candidate Des Derwin, received 5,512 votes. He was up against a huge machine that pulled out the votes.

Health service

Fasting for a hospital

MEMBERS of the campaign to keep Monaghan general hospital operational are fasting outside the Department of the Taoiseach. *Socialist Worker* spoke to two of them.

"Our protest is running for four weeks. At present the hospital has no A&E, no maternity service and no anaesthetists.

Clinic

"It is functioning as a 9 to 5 patient clinic and people are being sent to Cavan, Drogheda and even Navan in emergencies and for surgery.

"This means an hour and a quarter long journey on bad roads. Recently a local woman gave birth on the way to Drogheda and had to

be assisted by gardai. This is a disgraceful situation"

"All the hospitals are grossly overcrowded. A&E in Cavan just can't cope with the extra pressure.

"It doesn't make sense to take services out of Monaghan.

"Its existence saved many a life and it leaves the people of North Monaghan in particular very vulnerable."

"The NEHB deliberately ran down Monaghan Hospital. It's been going on for years... closing wards, opening others and then closing

them again, putting male and female patients into the same ward... there was no money put into it.

"For the government the wishes of local people don't count. We've nothing—no tourism, no infrastructure.

"The downgrading of the hospital is just one side of a general rundown of services for the people."

"The campaign will keep on going. Thousands of us marched in Dublin in July and we'll be back again, possibly in November to make sure we get a fully functioning acute hospital back."

NIPSA election

AS Socialist Worker went to press members of Northern Ireland's largest trade union, NIPSA, were voting to elect a new General Secretary.

This is a milestone for NIPSA as never before has its leading position been filled through an election. Previous General Secretaries have all been appointed by the union's General Council.

However over the past couple of years a group of activists have come together under the umbrella of "Time for Change" with the aim of placing control of NIPSA firmly in the hands of its members.

Now after gaining control of the General Council earlier this year Time for Change have put forward well-known trade unionist and Socialist Party activist, Carmel Gates, as their candidate against NIPSA full-time official John Corey.

Carmel explains why change is needed: "The public sector is under attack through privatisation and our jobs, our pay and our conditions of employment are threatened as never before. We need a union that fights to defend our

interests. This means we need change."

Recognising the conservatism of the present NIPSA leadership she says, "Our senior full time officials are out of touch with the problems faced by the membership. How could they know what it is like to have to take two jobs just to make ends meet when they receive senior civil service management salaries?"

"I started as a low paid clerical worker and know the problems faced by members. If elected I will only accept my current salary and will donate the rest to labour and trade union causes."

The significance of Carmel's election could be enormous. Never before has a woman led a trade union in Northern Ireland. Also a victory for the left would cause significant ripples right throughout the trade union movement in Ireland as a whole and give confidence to workers faced with attacks on their terms and conditions.

**VOTE FOR CHANGE!
—VOTE FOR A GENERAL SECRETARY ON A WORKER'S WAGE!
—VOTE FOR CARMEL GATES!**

Belgrove Cleaning

'It's about justice now'

AFTER OVER five weeks of protest outside the Meath and St. Mary's Hospitals, the cleaning staff employed by Belgrove cleaners were summoned to a meeting in the Ormond Hotel.

Their former boss David Lynch informed them that the company was going into liquidation.

He could have got an Oscar prize for his crocodile tears performance over the plight of the workers he had robbed and dumped on the scrap heap.

Mortgaged

The anger of the workers was palpable as they heard how their wages were not going to be paid even though he—allegedly—mortgaged his house to try to pay them.

A new contract cleaning company has been set up called Direct Cleaning Services by two of Belgrove's former managers. The workers strongly suspect

that Lynch is also involved in Direct.

He owns extensive property on the South Circular Road and in Spain but is clearly not willing to disclose his assets or to sell any of them to pay back the cleaners.

Some of them have over 18 years service. Most of them are deeply in debt after pay cheques bounced.

One woman who worked in St. Mary's Hospital was arrested and taken from her home to the police station after a local shop cashed one of the bounced pay cheques.

Workers on the picket are furious. Ann told *Socialist Worker*, "After 18 years working for this company I am mad. It's has gone beyond the money issue and is all about justice now.

"These gangsters cannot be allowed to just walk away from us like this after we sweated for them. We are going to see this through and get our jobs back."

On Friday 18th October a one-day strike action was taken by other ancillary staff in the hospitals to support the cleaners. These workers are employed by the Eastern Health Board.

Ann says, "If the Eastern



Health Board had contracted out the work immediately and insisted on retaining us as the staff, this would never have happened."

Support for the cleaners is vitally important. Donations and messages of support should be sent to the Jimmy Somers, SIPTU at Liberty Hall.

Students

Revolt against fees growing

Students in UCD held a demonstration on campus over the Fianna Fail's re-introduction of third level fees.

Over 300 students marched through the college gathering support for the Campaign for Free Education.

When Minister for Education Noel Dempsey came to speak, they barricaded him in to the Vet Science building for over two hours, cutting off access to his Merc!

Eventually college security had to sneak the minister out of a fire escape.

The actions of these students stands in contrast to the behaviour of their union leader, Aongus O'Hourhane, a member of Fianna Fail who enjoyed lunch with the minister while his members were protesting outside.

This is the same person who went on national radio to condemn his own stu-

What is needed now is maximum pressure on the Eastern Health Board to ensure that the cleaners are employed by the new contractors at the hospital, Derycourt Cleaning Services.

And the former bosses of BCS should be forced to pay back the monies they owe to these workers.

Benefit Social

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dents who were attacked by the police on the Reclaim the Streets demo.

Because this is the reality of many union bureaucracies, the fightback on fees is coming from grassroots groups like the Campaign

for Free Education who are setting up groups in every third level college in Ireland.

■ HUNDREDS of Trinity students marched through central Dublin to protest against the possible re-intro-

duction of tuition fees at third level.

Some 400 students then marched to the Education Department in Marlborough Street

Get involved, call 087 903 2281.

Irish Glass Bottles

PICKETS are back up at the Irish Glass Bottles. In October workers voted to reject an agreement 83 to 124 which would have seen a cap on redundancy payments for those with over 13 years service, an artificial deadline imposed on agreement, and the company refusing to pay on terms recommended by the Labour Court.

After the closure of the plant, workers had placed a picket on it, blocking the

movement of valuable equipment and stocks. But a deal was struck under pressure of legal action against the picket.

SIPTU officials pushed this deal. The picket was lifted and workers were asked to voluntarily take out the bottles and moulds so they could be sold.

The proceeds of the sale were supposed to go towards the redundancy payments. However the company has taken €7 million from that fund.

Through implementing the last deal they hoped to split the workforce by age, and get away with paying a fraction of the five weeks demanded.

But workers are now less

willing to listen to their officials and, having seen level of support on Oct. 4th, are still going to fight for five weeks pay for each year of service.

"It's a situation more and more workers are facing, so we need to get on the streets again and again," said Trevor.

At their last meeting the need for a cabin for the picketers was raised, and one worker is taking up a petition for their strike pay to be paid at a regular time and place.

"Workers have played by the bosses' rules and we paid the price. It's only by looking to ourselves and other workers that we can get something out of this."

Peerless Rugs

Peerless Rugs workers were delighted by the turn out on October 4th.

Ester Dempsey told *Socialist Worker*, "It was a great success. We were disappointed that we weren't on the platform in Dublin on the day. But because of what everyone did we got a meeting with Jack O'Connor (of SIPTU) and there will be talks shortly with ourselves and representatives of the company.

"This is the first time since the closure that the company has agreed to meet us and it was the numbers on the streets on October 4th that have helped us get to this position"

Mary Harney paid a visit to Athy in the last couple of

weeks and the workers organised a demonstration.

According to Ester "When we confronted Harney she told us that Martin Buckley wanted to put the factory up for sale and that he couldn't make us an offer until he had sold it.

"She said that our sit-in was preventing the sale". Ester and her colleagues are not buying into this however. Ester says, "No one is leaving that factory until we get the Labour court recommendation of three weeks per year of service into our hands.

"We are more determined than ever to keep our sit-in going. That's what we have to bargain with and we won't be giving it up.

"I'd say the same thing to IFI people. Hold on to

what you have. It's your trump card and use it to save your jobs or get a decent package".

Ester believes that the demonstrations in October show the way forward. "Workers have to be loud. You see nothing at the moment only jobs going down the tube. We need solidarity.

"The big guys are taking everything. They get the grants but they should be made to invest the money in the plants and forced to give their workers what they're due."

"We have to make it clear that if they don't listen to the trade unions then there will be more marches, that more people will come out and that stoppages will be called".

Socialist Worker

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Solidarity price €2.00

FIREFIGHTERS NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Turn
the
heat
on
Blair



FIREFIGHTERS AND emergency control room staff have voted 87 percent in favour of their first national strike in 25 years. None of them relishes going on strike.

In Northern Ireland the strength of feeling among firefighters resulted in an amazing 96.6 percent vote in favour of action.

Speaking immediately after the result of the ballot was announced, Regional Chairperson of the FBU, Jim Quinn, told *Socialist Worker* that he was "delighted" with the result and the turnout of 82 percent in the ballot. Furthermore he added, "This is a great day for the FBU and it's brilliant to get such a

mandate from members".

With the media circus in full swing after the dates for the first firefighter strike in 25 years were announced, the government responded by stating that the firefighters should hold off their action until it's "Independent" Pay Review is completed in December.

But as Jim Quinn told *Socialist Worker*, "The review is nothing but a scam, a farce and a tactical rouse". The government used the same tactic in 1977 to frustrate the firefighters but according to Jim "Under no circumstances will we enter into this review".

One of the review body's members has already stated that the firefighters' pay claim is over-inflated while another said that there is no way they will

recommend a minimum of £30k for firefighters, hardly the terms that an independent review can begin on.

Response

The sheer hypocrisy coming from the government in response to the firefighters' pay campaign is breathtaking.

Ted George, chairman of the Local Authority Employers, said the pay claim was "unrealistic, unaffordable, unreasonable and unjustified".

John Prescott echoes this opinion even though last year he led the rush by cabinet ministers to award themselves a 40 percent rise!

Tony Blair is prepared to spend billions on war, while

telling firefighters their pay claim will "damage the economy".

A fully qualified firefighter gets £21,531 for a 42-hour week, working round the clock shifts.

The firefighters are right to ask for £30,000 a year. And they know they are at the forefront of a drive against low pay across the public sector.

Nurses have put in for a 15 percent rise. Council workers, teachers, lecturers and others are taking action over pay.

A victory for the firefighters will help every group of workers. Everyone should build support for their fight.

Strike dates: 29th-31st October (48hrs); 2nd-4th November (48hrs); 22nd-30th Nov (8 days); 4th-12th Dec (8 days); 16th-24th Dec (8 days).